



1-161Inf. and 443rd CA team up on medical mission in South Baghdad.

Page 6

2nd BCT 'Black Knights' head south and assist in securing North Babil.

Page 8-9

Vandals rock 1st and 3rd BCT during USO concert tour.

Page 14



# Cav Country

Volume 1, Issue 20

"Telling the First Team's Story"

Jan. 22, 2005



By Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Hinckley, 256th Brigade Combat Team

## Birds of a Feather Fly Together

A pair of Task Force Baghdad 'Blackhawk' helicopters take off from a Camp Al-Thareer helicopter pad on their way to a mission as the sun sets on New Year's Day.

## 82nd Abn. Troopers Dig in on Haifa St.

Pfc. Mike Pryor  
82nd Airborne Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Haifa Street - the infamous neighborhood in Baghdad has been the site of near constant wild west-style shoot-outs and gun battles between insurgents and multinational forces.

Haifa Street - the new home for a company of 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers. They've been working hard on their new digs, a formerly vacant palatial residence.

Paratroopers from Company B of the 82nd's 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment and Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Battalion, 9th Regiment seized and secured the vacant palace in a Christmas week operation they called 'Field of Dreams.'

The purpose of the operation was to fortify the palace so it can be used as a base from which to conduct aggressive operations against the insurgents, said Sgt. Michael Cooper of Co. B.

"We're going to get this place secure, and then get out there and start hitting heads

See *Haifa*, page 3.

## Lieutenant Takes Hill with Platoon of Tanks

Gallant Actions Earn  
'Garry Owen' Soldier  
Bronze Star

By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns  
39th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraqi -- Last August, there were countless courageous actions made by Soldiers in the Battle for Najaf, but some undeniably stand out more than others. 1st Lt. John Baker, 28 of Killeen, Texas, was one such case. The former noncommissioned officer was recently awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his gallant actions under the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

Baker and his tank platoon spearheaded the assault on Najaf, leading the first troops for 2-7 into

the city.

"We didn't know what to expect," said Baker. "It turned out it was heavy resistance and we had to adapt."

Baker led his platoon up a hill under multiple mortar barrages, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), and small arms fire. His tank sustained a direct hit from an RPG in the fuel cell at the front of the tank. Despite taking a direct hit and fuel leakage, Baker continued forward with the fight.

"He took the brunt of the fire when we went in," said his company commander, Capt. Peter Glass, 29, of Hiltonhead Island, S.C.

Task Force 2-7 was charged with aiding the Marines in taking back the city from Muqtada Al Sadr's militia and restoring peace to the Muslim world's second most sacred city.

Baker's experience as a noncom-

missioned officer helped his commanders in their decision-making process to place him as the lead element of the fight in Iraq's second oldest city.

"His knowledge and his platoon's flexibility are why they are always the main effort," said 1st Sgt. Robert Blakey, 36, of Washington, D.C.

Baker went on to secure the first three objectives for 2-7, helping the task force gain its first major foothold to the city.

"I couldn't have done it without [my platoon]," said Baker. "They gave 110 percent."

1st Lt. John Baker, of Killeen, Texas, is awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his gallant actions in the Battle of Najaf. Despite having his tank hit by a rocket-propelled grenade, Baker was able to lead an assault into the city.



By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns, 39th BCT Public Affairs

## When We Look Ahead, We Won't Forget

"We have a message for the insurgent who attempts to operate from the area and disrupt these elections. We will find you, we will watch where you move, we will listen to you speaking to each other, we will fight, and we will defeat you. You cannot sleep, eat, move or meet without the clear understanding that you may be killed or captured at any moment. Cease your operations now and you'll be choosing to live. Cease now and Iraqis can join in the progress being made in Baghdad."

Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division, Jan. 5, 2005, Baghdad



By Spc. Marie Whitney, 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

A wax replica of the proposed monument is on display in the Division Headquarters building on Camp Al-Tahreer.

The Iraqi national elections are a little more than a week away. All of our labors over the past year, our sweat and even our blood culminate in this nation's first major step toward liberty and freedom.

You, the Soldiers of the First Team ... Task Force Baghdad, which is now nearly 40,000 strong, have been a beacon of hope for the Iraqi people, bringing their nation to the brink of democracy. You've done it by helping to rid the streets of Baghdad of insurgents, by bringing in humanitarian aid and by ensuring the progress of civil military operations aimed at improving the lives of every Iraqi.

We are resolved to see the mission through - to give the Iraqi people the opportunity to choose for themselves, after more than 30 years of having no choice at all, what type of government should represent them and who will lead a free Iraq. We are committed to this course. So are the Iraqi people and the interim Iraqi government.

Iraq's interim Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, has also told the world that he holds firm a Jan. 30 deadline for a national Iraqi vote.

"The government is committed to holding the elections on schedule," he said. "We know some Iraqis fear voting, but we have to overcome those fears."

Nearly 14 million Iraqis are poised to vote in the upcoming elections. The world will focus its attention on Baghdad voting stations on Jan. 30, when the will of the Iraqi people will be decided.

It is our solemn mission, in cooperation with Iraqi Security Forces and police, to provide a safe and secure environment allowing Iraqi citizens the opportunity to cast a vote for their own future.

### Pegasus 6 Sends

MG Peter Chiarelli



CG, 1CD

Based on the outstanding work accomplished by the First Team to this point, I know that each and every one of you will perform magnificently as history unfolds here in Iraq at the end of the month.

It is history ... our legacy that I want to address as my final thought.

Many of you have heard of our plans to erect a bronze memorial to honor our fallen comrades from Task Force Baghdad. The memorial will be a fitting tribute to their ultimate sacrifice.

The memorial design is complete and an Iraqi sculptor has started work on the project. Once completed, the memorial will be located on the east end of the division parade field at Fort Hood.

The memorial is being funded through individual donations. To ensure all Soldiers and civilians have the opportunity to contribute, donation boxes are located near the exits to Post Exchange facilities throughout Task Force Baghdad.

Both cash contributions and Army and Air Force Exchange Service "Pogs" (paper change) are welcome. Donations are voluntary.

Thank you for your support, and your service.

FIRST TEAM!

## Spur to The Moment

Photos by Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

### "How has this deployment made you better?"

"It's made me be more organized, I've made more goals for myself and I've definitely matured and realize what's important in life now."



Spc. Stefanie Lynch  
Military Police Platoon  
39th BCT

"I've seen a lot of things that have made me stronger. Rockets, mortars, things like that, they tend to make you appreciate the small things."



Pfc. Gary White  
Company B  
39th Support Battalion

"I got to meet a lot of new people and made new lifelong friends."



Spc. Billy Flores  
HHC, 980th Engineers

"I am more appreciative of life in general and of what I have at home."



Staff Sgt. Muri Alsop  
HHC, 39th BCT

"Dealing with different groups of people has improved my people skills."



MSgt. Davidson George  
HHC, 4th BCT

"It's really made me appreciate home and how good we have it back in the States."



Spc. James Dawes  
Troop E, 1-7 Cav.  
4th BCT

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## Truly Multinational

# Cav Troopers Help British Soldiers Assist Iraqis



By Sgt. John Queen, 3rd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

Two British Soldiers assigned to the Baghdad Signal Squadron for British Representatives help a young developmentally-disabled boy put his shoe back on during their visit to donate clothing and toys the orphanage where he lives.

**By Sgt. John Queen  
3rd BCT Public Affairs**

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- British soldiers of the 2nd Signal Regiment based in Yorkshire, England teamed up with 1st Cavalry Division troopers Dec. 29 in an effort to help handicapped and orphaned Iraqis on Baghdad's Karadah peninsula.

During the joint operation the Soldiers delivered more than \$9,000 worth of clothing, toys, cleaning supplies, beds and special needs equipment.

"We bought anything we thought these people would need," said British Army Sgt. Michelle Local. "[We bought] things that they just don't have easy access to here on a day to day basis."

Members of the 2nd Signal Regiment are here working in the Baghdad signal squadron for British Representatives.

Maj. David Duggan, the British officer in charge of the signal Soldiers explained that the squadron was looking for a local humanitarian cause to raise money for, and the easiest way to do that was through the United States military and its links in the area.

"We were lucky enough to find a civil affairs unit attached to the 1st Cavalry Division to help us

out finding a cause," said British Army 1st Lt. Sarah Panting, the unit's troop commander. "They procured the equipment that we raised money for, and took us out so we could give it to the charity."

Soldiers from the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion were able to find two organizations the British troops could donate to, the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Theresa Dar Al Mahabba, a Christian orphanage for developmentally disabled children and the Karadah Deaf-Mute Institute which makes uniforms for Iraqi police officers.

To raise money for the donations the British troops held a series of fund raisers during their six-month deployment to Iraq.

The idea for a charity like this comes from a tradition held by their regiment in England. Each year, their unit holds a fund-raiser to help pay for donations to the less fortunate.

"It's an event called 'Race the Sun,'" Local said. "We start early in the morning and it runs until late in the evening, with a series of (sporting) events that goes on all throughout the day."

"We just did a scaled-down version. That's all we could do in Baghdad," she added.

According to Panting, Local

not only organized the "Race to Sun" event, but bingo nights and a charity auction as well.

"The auction raised \$1,200," Local said. "We had a signed picture of the prime minister, a signed football from a team back in England, a signed photograph of a football player and a few other likings."

Duggan laughed and said they even received donations from their regiment back in England.

"The commander stood outside the cookhouse and made people put money in the pot before they could go in and get some food," he said. "They raised about 1000 pounds, or about \$1,800 that way."

"It's been a really positive experience for all of us," Panting said. "It's almost time for us to go home now and we've had this event to put our minds towards. It feels like we're doing something out of the ordinary ... out of our normal job specifications, that we could feel good about - that we've done some good here in Baghdad."

Panting noted her admiration for the nuns and other people who run the deaf and mute institute.

"They spend a lot of their time working to help other people," she said. "I think it is very commendable."

# Paratroopers Move Onto Haifa Streets, Begin Operations

From *Haifa*, page 1.

in," Cooper said.

The operation began on Christmas Eve. All that night, while snipers kept a lookout from the rooftops of nearby buildings, Kiowa Warrior helicopters circled overhead, and Bradley Fighting Vehicles rumbled up and down the surrounding streets, combat engineers from the 82nd worked to build up the palace's defenses.

Engineers used cranes to ring the grounds of the palace with massive protective concrete barriers. They also removed trees, set up fighting positions, strung concertina wire, and covered the top of the building with camouflaged netting.

The insurgents in the area didn't exactly roll out the welcome mat for their new neighbors. They attacked repeatedly throughout the operation with small arms fire and mortars.

"There were small firefights going on constantly," said Pvt. Jeff Tesiny of Co. B. "It was pretty intense. You didn't know when (an attack) was coming, you just knew it was coming."

All in all, it was a memorable Christmas Eve, said Co. B's top

non-commissioned officer, 1st Sgt. Scott Busma.

"That one will be kind of hard to forget," he said.

Over the following days, the paratroopers continued to reinforce the palace. They stacked hundreds of sandbags in front of the doors and windows, put a machine gun nest on the second floor balcony, and established multiple observation posts throughout the area.

They also found the time to scrounge up sofas, chairs and other furniture from abandoned houses nearby to make the palace a little more comfortable.

"For now, we just want to get the place secure enough so that we can come inside and chill out when we're not out on patrols," Cooper said.

By the end of the week, the mission was accomplished. Although they were still without heat, electricity, and running water, most of the paratroopers seemed happy with their new living arrangements.

"I'm liking this place," Sgt. David Frost said. "If we've done all this in a few days, imagine what we can do in a month."

Local insurgents may have



By Pfc. Mike Pryor, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs

A paratrooper from Company B, 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, scans Haifa Street for signs of insurgent activity from an observation post inside his company's new base of operation Dec. 30.

been imagining the same thing. In the days after the palace was occupied and patrols began hitting the streets, the number of attacks on U.S. forces fell off dramatically.

"It's funny, when the 'Eight-Deuce' shows up, everyone just clears out or gets their act

together," Frost said.

Frost and the other paratroopers from Co. B know they still have a long way to go before Haifa Street is totally pacified, but they have confidence in their ability to get the job done. A few days after the company moved into the

palace for good, someone taped a hand-scrawled sign up on the door.

It said "Haifa Street Police."

The message to the criminals and terrorists in the neighborhood was clear: There's a new sheriff in town.

## Joint Night Raid Brings Insurgents Down

By Spc. Jan Critchfield  
122nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE AL-AMAL, Baghdad, Iraq -- Under the cover of darkness Dec. 28, Soldiers of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment and Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, both of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, circled their Bradley Fighting Vehicles-a type of armored troop transport-around an insurgent

target deep in East Baghdad's Sadr City.

The target, an alleged recruiter of anti-Iraqi fighters, and his brother, another wanted criminal, were apprehended by the Iraqi Police while the two Cavalry companies supported the raid by forming an outer cordon, standing by to move in if the lightly equipped police came under enemy fire.

"We ended up getting the target, and his brother, who was also a target," 1st Lt. Nicholas Auletta, the leader of C Co.'s 2nd Platoon, said. "Getting someone that's

[against us] off the streets is always a good thing. Unfortunately, you never get all of them... but every one helps."

A testament to the value of interacting with the community and always having an interpreter available while on patrol, the intelligence that led to the raid came from a random citizen while Auletta and his men patrolled the city.

"On Dec. 23, we were doing a regular patrol... and a local came up to us and told us that there were some people from Fallujah that had moved into the area, and that they had conducted operations against multinational forces in Fallujah," Auletta said. "[The informant] also told us that [the target] was now trying to recruit other [insurgents]... to fight multinational forces within Sadr City."

1st Brigade Combat Team commander Col. Robert Abrams said the origins of the two insurgents wasn't clear until they had been questioned.

"It is hard to pin a label on somebody and say, 'Hey, he's a Fallujah fighter'... the only thing that's clear for us is if someone is Mahdi Army or not," Abrams said. "A lot of people like to say outsiders are doing it, but that's really hard to pin down."

"Potentially, we might have picked some guys up from Fallujah, but two and a half million people live in Sadr City who don't have anything better to do-all they like to do is fight, so someone offered them some money."

Regardless of the brothers' origins, the raid that caught them was executed perfect-

ly, Abrams said.

"[This was] another great joint Iraqi Security Force, U.S. mission, executed to standard, in the middle of the night, in the deepest bowels of Sadr City, without incident," he said. "It's a great sign of the future. It's all about the Iraqi Security Forces being able to do these types of missions by themselves, and if they need our backup support, we'll give it to them."

Unlike some past raids conducted by the 1st Cavalry Division in this volatile region, not one resident in the vicinity of the target building protested against the troops' presence or the pair being arrested. In the past, Abrams said, hundreds might have protested the detention of the men. This time, residents told Soldiers in 2-5 Cav. and local police that the two were "bad men."

"[There was a] big, positive response from people in the neighborhood. There were no people milling around, no firefight...nothing," Abrams said. "In fact, some people actually came out and said, through our translators, that they were glad we picked these guys up, because they were really well known bad guys. It's a pretty good sign."

"The city's been really peaceful, quiet; very receptive when we provide services... [such as] rebuilding schools, giving clinics supplies, as well as getting sewage out of the streets," Auletta said. "People seem to be pretty happy with that. Very visible projects, I think, have been working well for us. I think people see that we're here to help their way of life."



By Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, load up and prepare to set an outer cordon while Iraqi Police move in to nab a suspected anti-Iraqi forces recruiter and his brother in Sadr City Dec. 28.

## 1st Cav. Div. Lends Baghdad Farmers a Helping Hand

By Spc. Jan Critchfield  
122nd MPAD

CAMP RUSTAMIYAH, Baghdad, Iraq -- As a part of multinational forces' unrelenting drive to improve the lives of the Baghdad's citizens, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division is coordinating the construction of an equipment storage building for a farmer's co-op formed by 1-82 FA earlier this year.

"What we've been doing is working with the farmers out there and trying to get them organized," said Capt. William Powers, 1-82 FA information operations officer. "Not to the state of a U.S. co-op... just trying to get them to work together."

Since the co-op began in June, hundreds of tons of seed and fertilizer have been parceled out to eastern Baghdad farmers in an effort to jumpstart the local economy, provide more quality produce for the local population, and lend some of the poorer residents of the area-the farmers themselves-a

helping hand.

"We started working on this in June, but we had difficulty finding meeting places... so we decided what would help the co-op was to give it an actual place," Powers said. "Originally, we were going to renovate some buildings, but we were able to get the Ministry of Agriculture to donate some land for a co-op facility, so we're building a facility that is over 650 square meters, includes four large storage units as well as a large area in the middle for tractors. Attached to that is a restroom and a large conference facility. It will be furnished, as well as have a fence and a guard house."

When the project is complete and the co-op is in full swing farmers will have a place to gather and exchange ideas on growing techniques and methodology, bettering the community as a whole, Powers said. They will also be able to coordinate the amount and type of produce they grow, making it more valuable when they pile it onto the bed of their truck and drive to market in nearby Sadr

City or another part of Baghdad.

"[The farmers] aren't using the market as well as they could," he said. "By being organized, they can see what the need is at the market, and split up what they're growing, share equipment, and be able to get seed and fertilized much cheaper."

One of the problems the co-op will work to fix is that many farmers are trying to sell the same produce at the same time reducing its value Powers said.

The project will cost the 1 BCT \$200,000, but the impact on eastern Baghdad is sure to be lasting and significant, according to Powers.

"It'll benefit [the farmers] greatly," he said. "We're giving them computers, as well as filing systems, so they can [have on file] all the farmers in the area, the size of their crops [and] basic testing facilities so they can improve their output. It's also a place for the Minister of Agriculture for all of Baghdad; he has plans to do training there as well. It's a great organizational place for them to work."

"[The farmers] had unions before, but it was a union where 30 percent of their profits [went] to the government. In the co-op, it's more toward the free-market economy, where the profits will go toward the farmers instead of the government. However, the government will be there to assist, just

like... in the United States," Powers said. "The hardest part right now is letting [the farmers] learn what they need to do on their own. They've been relying on the Ministry of Agriculture for so long on what they need to do. Now, by having a formed co-op, they can try to learn to work themselves."



By Spc. Jan Critchfield, Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

A local man welds a frame that will support the roof of a building that will house a farmer's co-op in Eastern Baghdad. Funded by the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team, the building will house shared equipment that members of the co-op will use, as well as serve as an administrative and meeting center.



# Black Jack

Jan. 22, 2005

Page 5

## Cavalry Moves in on Insurgents Near Euphrates

By Spc. Andy Miller  
122nd MPAD

LATIFIYAH, Iraq-- Days after moving from Baghdad to Camp Dogwood in North Babil, the Soldiers of Task Force 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, went on the offensive against anti-Iraqi activity in this relatively unfamiliar area of Iraq.

At the end of Operation River Walk, a 36-hour cordon and search held Jan. 2 and 3 in and around the city of Latifiyah on the banks of the Euphrates River, the troopers at Camp Dogwood took a moment to celebrate.

In conjunction with 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, the battle-weary troopers had found over nine significant weapons caches, detained 43 suspected anti-Iraqi insurgents and discovered and destroyed several improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

It was the first time Multi-National Forces conducted this type of operation in this part of Iraq, according to Lt. Col. Tim Ryan, Task Force 2-12 Cavalry's commander. The area had served as a haven for anti-Iraqi insurgents who fled from



Task Force 2-12 Cavalry Abrams tanks refuel at a supply depot near Camp Dogwood in North Babil Jan. 3 during Operation River Walk. Tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles and up-armored humvees rolled through the streets of the Latifiyah area of Iraq looking for anti-Iraqi insurgent activity during the 36-hour cordon and search operation.

Fallujah and other areas of Iraq, he said. So the Army and Marines put their resources together to eliminate their ability to rest and regroup.

"[We detained] 43 individuals. So that's 43 people who aren't making car

bombs, IEDs, shooting at convoys and so on," Ryan said during the closing hours of the operation. "And equally important, we've gathered a lot of information and made a lot of contacts that will allow us to continue to pursue the enemy in this area.

So, the end result is the enemy doesn't have sanctuary. We've got him back on his heels and there's no where for him to hide."

The movement of 2-12 Cav's parent unit, the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team to the North Babil area of Iraq coincides with the upcoming Iraqi free elections slated for later this month.

Maj. Chris Wilbeck, the 2-12 Cav's operations officer, said eliminating anti-Iraqi forces from North Babil is part of the plan to provide security during the Iraqi election season.

"This area directly influences the Baghdad area," Wilbeck said. "Our presence here will help these people vote and enjoy democracy, as well as helping Baghdad be more secure during the elections."

The operation was also part of Multinational Forces' plan to deny sanctuary to Anti-Iraqi insurgents. Task Force 2-12 Cav has been helping with this mission since November, and in addition to River Walk has conducted operations in Taji, Tarmiyah, Fallujah, Amiriyyah and Karmah.

## Task Force 2-12 Finds Large Cache near Euphrates

By Spc. Andy Miller  
122nd MPAD

LATIFIYAH, Iraq -- When Task Force 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division moved from Camp Striker in Baghdad to Dogwood less than a week ago, they were met with a barrage of mortar hits on the camp and improvised explosive device (IED) hits on their convoys. Operation River Walk, the first large-scale cordon and search operation in this area along the Euphrates River, was held Jan. 2 and 3, a few days after their arrival.

While one of the purposes of River Walk was a general search of the area, another part was designed to take out specific targets early in the operation. The Task Force believed anti-Iraqi insurgents had moved into the area of North Babil after recent military operations in Fallujah and Baghdad put them on the run.

"I think we've had indicators the whole time the 1st Cavalry Division has been here that this has been an area that the insurgents have been basing out of, and have been using to conduct attacks inside Baghdad," said Maj. Chris Wilbeck, the Task Force 2-12 operations officer. "So this area directly influences the security inside Baghdad. [This operation] is part of the larger Multinational force effort to deny sanctuary to any insurgents."

To accomplish this, elements of the battalion's Blackhawk Company, along with their attached 10th Platoon, Scouts Battalion of Estonian light infantrymen, moved in on specific targets in the area where many of the mortars and IEDs

were traced to. What they found there was one of the biggest caches of weaponry and munitions found by the task force this year, according to Capt. Dave Perry, the battalion's assistant operations officer.

After coming up empty-handed during several searches in the target area, the team of American and Estonian Soldiers got a tip on a suspected weapons dealer. A search of the suspect's home and grounds yielded a cache loaded with hundreds of mortar rounds and other explosives, along with over 70,000 assault rifle rounds and a variety of illegal weaponry and implicating electronic equipment. Seven suspects were detained during the search.

Wilbeck and Perry attributed much of the success of this search to the cooperation of the Iraqi people.

"Today was a good example of the Iraqi people helping out to ensure their own security," Wilbeck said. "We couldn't be here finding all these weapons, mortars and IEDs if it hadn't been for the help of local Iraqis pointing out that these were the bad guys. So, it's not just our efforts, it's the efforts of the Iraqi people in conjunction with us."

In this case, the intelligence was generated on the ground with the help of Spc. Ahmad Mohammed, a medic with the battalion's headquarters company. Mohammed speaks fluent Arabic, and found himself playing the role of interpreter more often than not over the past year. He said it's not that easy.

"Not everyone here is going to give you information. Ninety-nine percent of the people here are not going to give you information," Mohammed said. "What

you really have to do is talk to them and try to convince them that their family is more important than these guys that are trying to hide.

"It just takes one," he continued. "I don't need 100 guys. I just need one to say something."

This time, one was enough.

"We found someone who was willing to help. Another Iraqi national who was tired of the anti-Iraqi activity that is occurring in the area, because not only is it unsafe for the coalition forces operation, it makes it unsafe for the Iraqi families," Perry said.

At the end of Operation River Walk, the cache was one of nine that Task Force 2-12 found in the Latifiyah area in conjunction with the 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment. Along with the weapons caches, the operation ended with the detainment of 43 suspected anti-Iraqi insurgents and the discovery and destruction of several improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

"We had to come down here and prepare for a couple days and the enemy got a couple shots on us, but the balls back in our court again and we will clean house," Perry said.



By Spc. Andy Miller, 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Spc. Ahmad Mohammed (right), a medic and interpreter with the Task Force 2-12 Cav's headquarters company, looks on as 1st Lt. Richard Kehoe, the battalion's assistant intelligence officer, inspects a confiscated assault rifle during a search of a suspected anti-Iraqi arms dealer Jan. 2.



# Grey Wolf

Page 6

Jan. 22, 2005

## Medical Mission Provides Checkups, Delivery of Boots

By Staff Sgt. Susan German  
122ndMPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Offering medical assistance to local Iraqis can be a complex operation for Soldiers, not wanting to make targets of the very people they're trying to help.

On a bright and chilly December morning, Iraqi men, women and children lined up in anticipation as Soldiers of Company C, 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment, and the public health team from the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, both part of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, set up a neighborhood aid station and donation site during a medical humanitarian assistance mission in Village 10 in southeastern Baghdad recently.

"A lot of times we get information from the platoon leaders who come out and patrol these areas," Spokane, Wash. resident 1st Lt. Travis Robbins, the medical platoon leader and battalion physician assistant for the 1-161INF, said. "They assess the situation and try to get us out here to get them a good thorough evaluation of the medical status of the people in the area."

Under increased security, local Iraqis presented their symptoms to medical staff on hand who were prepared to treat a variety of physical ailments. Medics located at the front gate screened the Iraqis as part of a triage team, in order to determine chief complaints, fill out an ailment card and then move them to the doctors' stations.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Susan German, 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Sgt. Karolina Lojewska (left), from Chicago, Ill., a medic with Headquarters Company, 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, talks to an Iraqi woman assisted by hand gestures during a Medical Humanitarian Assistance mission in Village 10 Dec. 17.

Although lacking the privacy of a doctor's office, people appeared happy to have the doctors' attention. Children were set on examination tables as parents discussed their symptoms with the doctors through interpreters and hand signals.

"The people suffer from the normal things that you see in an

environment like this, poor nutrition, poor dental health, their hygiene's certainly not the best," said Capt. Michael Gould, a physician assistant, 443rd CA, from Boston.

Anyone with a weakened immune system is a potential victim during cold and flu season. Medics

came equipped with children's medications, prenatal vitamins for the women, the typical anti-inflammatory meds for muscle and joint pain, antibiotics for minor infections, and the run-of-the-mill cold medications, Gould said.

"The other thing we do have is a station set up there where we're

also giving out toothbrushes, toothpaste, personal hygiene items, for everybody who comes through here," he said.

During a second part of the mission, dubbed Operation Boots from Suits, 1st Lt. Bryan Suits, fire support officer for Company C, 1-161 INF, and radio talk show host with KVI-570 radio station in Seattle, invited his listeners to donate rubber boots and socks for children so that when the winter rains turn the roads into mud puddles the kids feet are protected.

With a radio audience of 250,000 patriotic Americans, Suits challenged listeners to mail boots to him in Baghdad. If one out of every 100 listeners were to send a pair of boots to Iraq, there would be plenty for the children in his area of operations, he said. The response was so great that they'll be able to supply boots to kids in several of the villages in their area of operations, Suits said.

The medical humanitarian assistance missions conducted by the battalions provide some medical care for local Iraqis while allowing the distribution of supplies and the building of rapport between the Soldiers and Iraqis.

"I think a lot of the times they see Americans as hiding behind tanks and stone walls, and there's really no personal interaction," Gould said. "It's a good chance to get out in the community and they get to see us close up and realize that we're probably not the monsters that the Zargawi network paints us out to be."



(Above) Staff Sgt. Scott Browne, from Vancouver, Wash., of Company C, 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment, helps fit a young Iraqi child with a new pair of rubber boots donated by KVI-570 radio listeners in Seattle, Wash. (Left) Soldiers sort donated boots before giving them to children who came to visit the doctors during a Medical Humanitarian Assistance mission in Village 10. (Right) An Iraqi boy hugs his new stuffed toy after his arm is immobilized with a sling.





# Warriors

Jan. 22, 2005

Page 7

## Airmen Help Warriors Predict the Weather

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel  
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- When aircraft of the 4th Brigade Combat Team take to the skies, a myriad of external forces affect how the birds fly. From how high the aircraft can go (altitude), to visibility, even affecting weapon systems; arguably, no force has greater influence on flight operations than Mother Nature herself.

To help manage the effects of weather on flight operations, Airmen of the 30th Weather Squadron, U.S. Air Force attached to the 4th BCT, 1st Cavalry Division use all information sources available to provide commanders accurate and reliable forecasts.

"Every time you look out your window and decide whether or not to put on a jacket, you've just judged the weather," said Ft. Hood, Texas resident Tech. Sgt. Scott Darling, the squadron's non-commissioned officer in charge. "That's what we do, only we have a bit more sophisticated tools."

Among the squadron's tools is the Tactical Meteorological Observing System-53 (TMOS-53). It looks like something one could imagine sitting on the moon reporting information back to Earth with its tripod base, computer jammed mid-section, and a long, thin antennae jutting up from its center.

"The TMOS-53 contains sensors that report information on temperature, barometric pressure, cloud heights and much more," Darling said. "All that information is then relayed back to computers we monitor from inside."

The information gained from the system is then passed to commanders for flight operation and battle planning.

"We are an integral part of the planning



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Tech. Sgt. Scott Darling (right), and 2nd Lt. Matthew Addison, 30th Weather Squadron, USAF attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division make adjustments to their equipment on a rooftop at Camp Taji.

staff as well as heavily involved in daily operations," explained squadron officer in charge, 2nd Lt. Matthew Addison. "On a daily basis we provide the commander with the information he needs to determine if conditions are safe for flight operations. Working with future plans, we provide the weather analysis as to when might be the best time to launch, from the perspective of weather, an operation."

"And it's not just the type of information people might expect," Darling said. "For instance, most people don't think of the weather effects on weapons system; wind is going to have a direct impact on the trajectory of a missile fired. So when we give our weather briefs, we jam a lot of information

into them, giving planners and commanders as complete a picture as possible."

In addition to updating staff and commanders, the squadron has a good working relationship with the pilots of the brigade.

"Pilots walk-in or call all the time to get an idea of what the weather looks like before they head out to their aircraft," Darling said. "We've also provided real-time information to pilots as they've approached a target. We're a pilot's best friend."

Ask anyone accustomed to getting their weather information from the nightly news, predicting the weather is not an exact science. To help ensure Airmen receive the best training possible, the Air force sends new Meteorological and Navigation sys-

tems apprentice to a one year training program at Keesler, Air Force Base in Mississippi.

"The training we get is just intense," said Senior Airman Jason McClish of Louisville, Ky. "It actually exceeds the standards of the National Weather Service (NWS). Once we are done with the course, all one would have to do would be to take the NWS certification test and they are nationally certified. So you could say we know a little bit more than your average TV weatherman."

Over the course of their deployment, the squadron has faced numerous challenges, from limited data centers to the sometimes sudden, violent changes Iraqi weather can make.

"Their aren't as many forecasting centers set up over here, so you have to rely more on our equipment, knowledge and experience...and that's proven tough in some events, like sand storms that just come out of nowhere," McClish said.

Chuckling as if sharing an inside joke, Darling agreed.

"The funny thing about weather forecasting is you could accurately forecast the weather 99 percent of the time and people will remember the one time you got it wrong," Darling said.

Twenty four-hour operations is the name of the game in this combat zone for the five Airmen who make up the squadron, but according to Addison, his Airmen have risen to the challenge.

"My staff is wonderful," he said. "They really make me look good running full-time operations like they have, dealing with the conditions they have. This is my first command and I just couldn't have asked for better."

## 'Warriors' Bid Farewell to 1-25 Aviation...Mostly

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel  
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- The 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division bid a fond farewell to 1st Battalion (Attack), 25th Aviation Regiment, an integral part of the Warrior's lethal, agile team, during a ceremony at the Warrior Pad Jan 3.

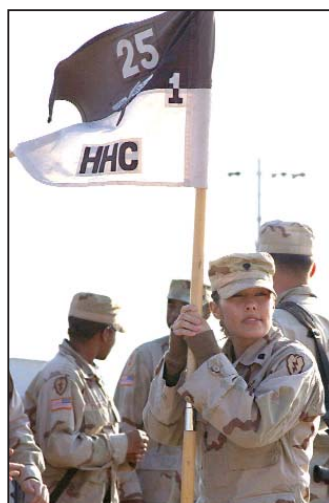
Originally intended to be a color casing, the ceremony was modified as a farewell to those Soldiers going home. With elections in Iraq looming on the horizon, more than 100 Soldiers from 1-25th have extended their tour in support of additional security concerns.

Arriving to Iraq in January 2004, Soldiers of 'Lightning Attack' spent two months at Baghdad International Airport before becoming some of the first residents of Camp Taji. Over the course of their 10 months here, the camp has undergone an amazing transformation. All the while, the mission of the battalion has stayed the same.

"[We've flown] over 24,100 hours flown in support of 17 maneuver brigades and three divisions [1st Armored, 82nd Airborne, and the 1st Cavalry]," said Capt. Jeffrey McCoy, an administration officer with the 1-25th.

McCoy said the amount of hours the battalion's OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters have flown is a number not seen since the days of the Vietnam War.

"Those 24,100 hours," said McCoy,



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Spec. Amanda Graves, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment, holds her company's guide-on before the ceremony.

"are the culmination of over 6,000 reconnaissance, security, and close combat operations all over Iraq. We've done a little bit of everything."

Even more impressive, McCoy said, is the battalion's maintenance record during

this deployment.

"The Department of the Army standard for 'fully mission capable aircraft' is 75 percent," he said. "Throughout the deployment we've maintained 83 percent all while flying at approximately six times the amount we would have flown in garrison."

As Soldiers gathered into company formations, a stiff wind helped to proudly unfurl each company's guide-on as commanders called their units to attention and the ceremony began.

4th Brigade Commander, Col. James McConville approached the podium and addressed the assembled troops.

"We thought today was going to be a casing ceremony, but alas, the 'Warriors' still need you," McConville said. "When I talked to [1-25 Aviation's commander, Lt. Col.] Mike Lundy about keeping some of you here with us, he told me that there were so many volunteers to stay that he had to make the hard decision of who among you to send home!"

McConville went on to thank the Soldiers of 'Lightning Attack' for the outstanding service they have provided all of Task Force Baghdad, noting, in what has become the mantra of the 4th BCT, "When we fly, Soldiers don't die."

With McConville closing his remarks, Lt. Col. Michael Lundy offered his heartfelt thoughts.

"I'm taking a chance coming up here to speak with you today having written nothing

down in preparation," he said. "I wanted to speak straight from the heart and to try and keep this short. We have had a tremendous experience over the course of our deployment; it has been an honor to be a part of the 'First Team.'"

Lundy further went on to thank the brigades and battalions Lightning Attack has supported throughout TF Baghdad and ended by thanking his Soldiers for always being "the vigilant scouts of the air-ground team".

In a gesture rarely seen outside organic Cavalry units, McConville presented Lundy and his entire unit with a certificate officially adding the battalion to the rolls of the 'Warriors Order of the Golden Spurs.'

In attendance at the ceremony was the 1st Cavalry Division's Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli. Not originally scheduled to speak, Chiarelli said the importance of the 1-25th's role in supporting Task Force Baghdad moved him to say a few words.

"I asked my aid on the way up here if I had a speaking role today, and he told me I didn't," Chiarelli said. "But the role you Soldiers played in this task force cannot be understated. I'm going to bring back a whole lot more Task Force Baghdad Soldiers because of the work you Soldiers do. On behalf of all the brigade, battalion and company commanders who couldn't make it today, I wanted to personally thank you."



# 1st Cavalry Division's 'Black Knights' Start

By Spc. Andy Miller  
122nd MPAD

MAMUDIYAH, Iraq -- A massive cordon and knock operation in the Mamudiyah area of north Babil Dec. 30 gave the troopers of 1st Cavalry Division's Task Force 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment 'Black Knights' a good feeling about their newly tasked mission to set the conditions for the upcoming Iraqi free elections in this largely rural area of Iraq.

After spending almost a year working with the Iraqi people and fighting anti-Iraqi forces in Baghdad and other hot spots in Iraq, the Task Force, along with its parent 2nd Brigade Combat Team, was most recently assigned to the large, mostly rural, section of Iraq running from south of Baghdad to north of Babylon. To introduce themselves to the area, the Black Knights kicked off Operation Crossroads, a 24-hour boots on the ground operation to root out potential anti-Iraq activity in the area.

"We didn't find a lot of bad guys, and we didn't find caches...but we did get a chance to meet some good people out there," Lt. Col. Myles Miyamasu, the Task Force commander said after the operation. "I think that more than anything else we put the information out that a large military force is now operating in your area, and if you want to play,

you have to play nice. And if you want to play mean, then you're going to lose."

"I think it's the first time they saw that many tanks, Bradleys and infantrymen on the ground," Miyamasu continued. "And so it was a good calling card for the 1st Cavalry Division to introduce itself to the people of Mamudiyah."

Prior to their assignment to north Babil, the Black Knights spent about 10 months patrolling the Kadimiyyah neighborhood of Baghdad and conducted several other quick-fire missions, including to battles in Najaf in August and Fallujah in October. These troopers performed countless raids, searches and cordon operations before Crossroads. The reaction they received from the Iraqis in Mamudiyah was somewhat more pleasant than what they've been accustomed to in the past, though, according to Capt. Steve Stauch, the Company A, 'Mad Dawgs' executive officer.

"We actually made and met some friends in the area," Stauch said. "A lot of the people are very happy to see us here. They were passing out bread to us and giving the Soldiers chai (local tea), and offering breakfast...this, that and the other thing. That's always a good thing, it helps you build relations."

Because the Task Force didn't have any specific intelligence on anti-Iraqi activity in the area, there wasn't

a need to conduct a more aggressive raid, or cordon and search type operation where they would break down doors and search through belongings. Instead, they took a gentler approach toward the locals 1st Lt. Doug Schaffer, a Company A platoon leader, said.

"When we show up and we knock on their doors and we treat them with the respect that they're used to as Iraqis, and as people in general, that's what you get, you get hospitality and respect, you get information, you get a bond built if you will," Schaffer said of the hospitality his infantry troopers received from a majority of the approximately 300 houses they visited during the 15-hour cordon.

Even without making any arrests or finding much contraband, the operation was a success because of the intelligence gained, and the contacts made with the local populace. It was also a success because the Soldiers, though they were prepared to, didn't have to fight their way through another day, Sgt. Matthew Jones, an infantry Soldier with Company A's 1st Platoon said.

"A quiet, calm, happy town, keeping it [peaceful], sometimes that can be the hardest job you have in the country, but it's also the best...because you've got something to maintain; a foothold. So it gives you something to work for while you're here. It gives you the feeling you're here for a reason," Jones said.



Staff Sgt. William Menjivar (left), Force 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Force 1-5's parent 2nd Brigade (taking over military operations in



(Above and below) The Soldiers of Company A, Task Force 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, walk alongside their wheels in Mamudiyah, Iraq. The troopers of Company A searched over 300 homes in a section of the city during Operation Crossroads Dec. 30.



Spc. Victor Felix (left), a medic from Watsonville, Calif., Pvt. Juan Cantu, an infantryman from San Juan, Calif., all with Company A, Task Force 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, the children were literally singing an Arabic tune together. He said he learned the song in



# Take Out New Territory in Northern Babil



Photos by Spc Andy Miller 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment (122M PAD), squad leader and Pvt. Juan Cantu, infantry, both with Company A, Task Force 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, pass out candy to children in Mamudiyah, Iraq, Dec. 30. Task Force 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, held the operation after recently taking control of the north Babil area of Iraq running from Baghdad to Babylon.



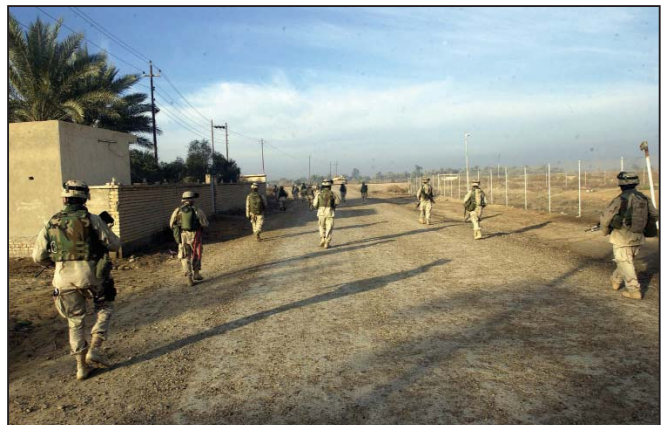
Sgt. Felix and Pvt. Silva, both from Fort Worth, Texas, and Pvt. 2nd Class Matthew Silva, an infantryman, walk with children in the streets of Mamudiyah, Iraq, Dec. 30. Felix and Silva are working with Iraqi National Guard Soldiers.



Soldiers of Company A, Task Force 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, take care in moving upstairs during a search in Mamudiyah, Iraq. Operation Crossroads was held by Task Force 1-5 Dec. 30 to acquaint themselves with the north Babil area of Iraq.



A Soldier from Task Force 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, walks alongside a Humvee during Operation Crossroads in Mamudiyah, Iraq, Dec. 30. The 24-hour operation was held by Task Force 1-5's parent 2nd Brigade Combat Team, which recently assumed control of military operations in the north Babil area of Iraq, a largely rural swath of land running from Baghdad to Babylon.



Task Force 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment Soldiers foot march it through the streets of Mamudiyah, Iraq, during Operation Crossroads Dec. 30. The infantry and tank troopers of Task Force 1-5's Company A searched over 300 homes during the 15-hour cordon and knock segment of the operation.



# Red Team

Page 10

Jan. 22, 2005

## Combat Engineers Keep Camp Falcon Functioning

By Spc. Al Barrus  
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-SAQR, BAGHDAD, Iraq -- From patrolling to construction work: demolition to security, the Soldiers of Assault and Obstacle Platoon of B Company, 8th Engineer Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, have performed a sundry of missions over their 10-plus months working under the 5th Brigade Combat Team, here.

While it's not unusual for combat engineers to execute tasks aside from their military specialty in Iraq - doing patrols and other infantry tasks - no platoon in B 8th Eng has learned as much on-the-job training and skills as the A and O Plt., said Marlboro, Mass., native Capt. Matt McCulley, company commander.

A prime example is the installation of a sewage system on Forward Operating Base Falcon; a task usually taken on by civilians or combat-heavy engineers, said Bronx, New York, native Staff Sgt. Greg Grady, a squad leader.

"We've been working this sewage system for a month," Grady explained. "We are all combat engineers and this is outside of our job description. I just happen to have

civilian experience in surveying. We came out here and did it all. We surveyed the land, I drew out the plans."

The sewage pipeline the platoon lays will allow the entire camp access to Baghdad's main sewage grid, eliminating the need for the current septic tank system, as well as the cost that comes with periodic pumping. With a total of seven weeks work, the pipe system is expected to be complete late January.

This project is just one of many the A and O platoon has taken on from FOB Falcon's base operations. The platoon has built and demolished walls, supervised the construction of barracks, and made an array of other structures on post.

However, from time to time to Soldiers get to indulge in the job they joined the Army for.

"Once we are done with this we will go on to something else. Maybe back to patrols," Grady said. "We don't mind doing the patrols. Infantry is like second nature to us."

Grady said the platoon is always ready to accomplish any mission that summons for their skills in assault and obstacle engineering.

neering.

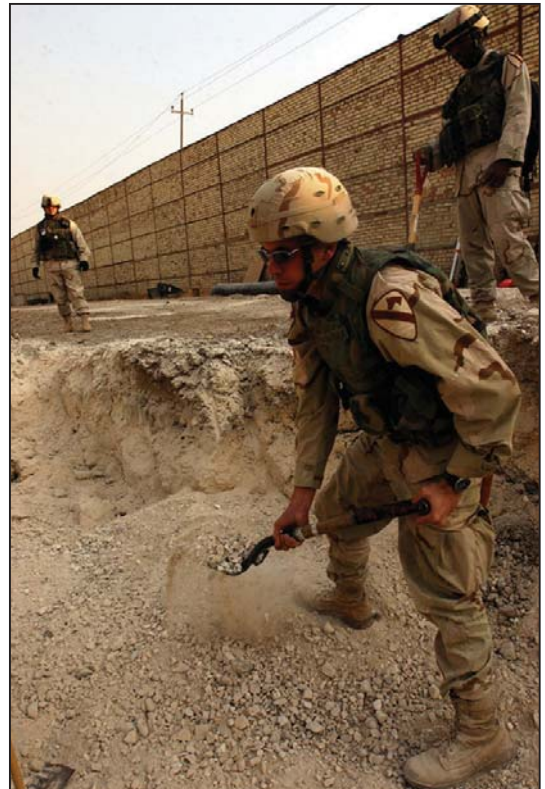
"We're always on call to go into sector and bulldoze berms and barriers or take out ditches," he said. "Or we might block out a road that an enemy mortar team would use after they fire, making it harder for them to leave in a hurry."

Still, most of the platoon's work hours are put into construction on the FOB, learning new skills every day.

"This is my first time surveying, and it's kind of tough," said Collins, Miss., native Spc. Dante Sansom who operates a surveying tool. "Everyday I learn something new about it. I've also learned how to use new heavy machinery and how to do different measurement. I'm doing what I got to do to get back home to the wife and kids."

Tasked to base operations, the Assault and Obstacle platoon isn't getting in as much time in sector as the sapper platoons in their company, but their mission is vital to the 5th Brigade Combat Team none the less, McCulley said.

"They aren't out on the streets everyday," he concluded. "But they're making this camp better and safer, and I think that's just as important."



By Spc. Al Barrus, 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Spc. David Valenzuela, a combat engineer in the Assault and Obstacle Platoon, B Co., 8th Engr. Bn. adds extra gravel to areas in the pipe ditch that need a bit more elevation to make the work level.

## 1-21 FA, 304th ING Search Al-Saidiyah Muhalla

By Cpl. Bill Putnam,  
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-SAQR, Baghdad, Iraq -- The fourth battalion-sized search of neighborhoods in the Al Rashid District's Saidiyah muhalla by Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment and the 304th Iraqi National Guard Battalion, proved to be a success.

"We accomplished in terms of what we would accomplish there," Maj. Jay Soupene, operations officer, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, said of the Jan. 8 operation.

Soupene, a native of Anamosa, Ia., said the battalion had been gathering intelligence of growing insurgent activity from within the Saidiyah muhalla for some time.

While there weren't a constant number of attacks, there had been a recent "spike" in attacks on Multinational and Iraqi forces, he said.

In the past few weeks, the area saw a number of roadside bombs, or Improvised Explosive Devices, that had exploded or been discovered, an increase in the small arms attacks and a car

bomb parked along the area's major highway, Highway 8.

The area has "become a little more... active," Soupene noted. That spike in activity set the mission planning process in motion.

Three large sections of the muhalla were cordoned off by 1-21 FA's 68th Chemical Company and elements of the 304th Iraqi National Guard Battalion before dawn Jan. 8.

Early that morning,

Soldiers from 1-21 FA's Batteries A and B raided homes of several suspected insurgents. They ended up detaining two men suspected of insurgent activity in the area.

The raids and subsequent search were a combination of operations the 5th Brigade Combat Team had been conducting to establish security before the Jan. 30 Iraqi parliamentary elections, said Soupene. Fifth BCT units have been conducting

almost nightly raids on homes of insurgents to shut down their activities as the elections draw closer.

Soldiers from 1-21 FA's Batteries A and B then searched the homes. They found 37 AK-47s, a number of pistols and rifles. IED-making materials were pulled out of some of the almost 200 homes by the joint US-Iraqi search.

"That's about normal," Soupene said.

The biggest benefit of the mission wasn't just pulling those weapons or bomb-making materials off the street, Soupene said. It was bringing the perception of security to the residents of Saidiyah, he said.

"The people tend to welcome us, generally speaking," Soupene said.

Saidiyah residents know there are insurgents in their neighborhoods and want to root them out, Soupene said. "It's just a matter of finding and detaining them. And we're here to disrupt their activities," said Soupene.

But what the large-scale search means, said Soupene, is setting conditions for local security for the Iraqi parliamentary

elections set for Jan. 30. The elections will be the nation's first since it was founded in 1932. The insurgency is trying to disrupt the elections through waves of car bombings and attacks on the Iraqi people and Iraqi Security Forces.

During the mission, 1-21 FA's civil affairs team set up several distribution points to hand out backpacks, toys and flyers about the mission's goals and also about the elections. The CA team handed out over 1,000 backpacks and several reams of flyers to Saidiyah residents during the mission.

Some of the literature came from the Iraqi Civil Dialogue Group and the Independent Election Commission of Iraq explaining the purpose of the Jan. 30 vote.

"We were able to start pushing those products so people know what to expect come [Jan. 30.],"

Soupene noted. The mission wasn't the first nor will it be the last, Soupene said. This search was the fourth in four weeks, he explained.

"So we're going through 'chunks' of that sector of Baghdad," Soupene said.



By Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Spc. Jeremy Soukup, a member of the civil affairs team attached to 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, hands a flyer to a Saidiyah resident during the large cord-and-search of several Saidiyah neighborhoods Jan. 8.



# Bowie Brigade

Jan. 22, 2005

Page 11



By 1st Lt. Chris J. Heathscott, 39th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

Brig. Gen. Ron Chastain, commanding general of the 39th Brigade Combat Team, swears in a group of Soldiers at Camp Taji, Iraq during a short re-enlistment ceremony as the brigade's senior noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Isbell looks on. Although re-enlisting for various reasons, all were able to take advantage of the National Guard Bureau's latest initiative to retain Soldiers: a \$15,000 bonus.

## \$oldiers Line Up to \$ign Up Tax Free Bonus of \$15,000 Lures Troops to Re-enlist

By Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns  
39th BCT Public Affairs

TAJI, Iraq -- The word is out in Iraq and National Guard Soldiers are lining up to see the money.

The National Guard Bureau recently released its new policy on re-enlistment bonuses that took effect Dec. 14th. The Army National Guard tripled its bonuses for possible returning Soldiers in an effort to keep their progressively thinning ranks filled.

Generally, Sgt. 1st Class Chris Burks, a retention officer currently stationed in Iraq with Arkansas' 39th Brigade Combat Team, saw two to three Soldiers a month who were willing to raise their right hand for another stint in an organization increasingly relied upon for overseas duty. But since the new policy took effect, he has signed up 16 Soldiers within his brigade in just nine days.

"Money talks," stated Burks bluntly.

The new policy raises six-year re-enlistment benefits from its original \$5,000 to an unprecedented \$15,000. Soldiers may also elect for a three-year extension to garnish \$7,500 rather than commit to a lengthy six-year obligation.

Over the past year, the National Guard has seen a large increase in the number of deployments and its growing need to retain Soldiers, Burks said. This need prompted officials at the National Guard Bureau to create bonuses proportional to the Active Army's.

"These dollar amounts are unheard of," Burks said.

The impressive sum of greenbacks isn't for everyone, though. They are tied to critical job

shortages throughout the Guard and select high action units. Each state identifies units that are critical, or are critically short in personnel and makes them eligible for the incentive, Burks said.

Jobs seen most crucial at this time generally include those combat related, such as the infantrymen, mortar men, and combat engineers. Others include vital military intelligence positions needed for the war on terror, such as analysts and linguists.

Soldiers like Spc. Melvin Wright, 34, of Conway, Ark., are lining up to sign re-enlistment papers in Iraq because if they re-enlist overseas, their lump sum bonuses are tax-free. Still, Wright, a 15-year veteran said he planned to re-enlist despite the attractive lure of money.

"You've got to like what you do first, because no amount of money is worth what you go through," Wright said. "The job is very valuable and I don't know how you could put a price tag on it. The money is just icing on the cake. Your real reward is protecting your fellow Americans."

The Guard has also doubled its initial enlistment bonuses trying to catch the attention of those coming into the force structure from high school and college.

"They have seen the dramatic drops in enlistments over the past year and saw the need to increase the amount of enlistment bonuses to attract young Soldiers," Burks said.

National Guard and Army Reserve forces currently make up 40 percent of nearly 150,000 now serving in Iraq. Guard officials estimate the number of Army Reserves and National Guard troops serving on active duty will remain at upwards of 100,000 over the next two years.

## Artillerymen Honor their Patroness, 14 Welcomed

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel  
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- Soldiers of the 103rd and 206th Field Artillery Regiments gathered at the 39th Brigade Combat Team Chapel for a dining-in ceremony, Dec. 18th, in honor of St. Barbara, the artillery's Patron Saint.

In addition to remembering their patroness, 14 exemplary artillery Soldiers were welcomed to 'The Order of St. Barbara,' a prestigious order within the Artillery community.

Legend has it that St. Barbara was killed around 300 AD by her father, after expressing Christian beliefs, to the complete exclusion of her family's pagan heritage. Making his way down a hillside after decapitating St. Barbara, her father, Dioscorus, was struck by lightning, instantly killed. Due to the nature of Dioscorus' death, St. Barbara was early on considered the Patron Saint from thunderstorms, fires and sudden death. Early artillery pieces were often

unstable, blowing up nearly as often as firing a shell; artillerymen often invoked St. Barbara to protect them.

"It is appropriate, even in circumstances such as those we currently find ourselves," said special guest speaker Brig. Gen. Richard Formica, commanding general, III Corps Artillery, "that we stop and remember our history, our lineage, all those that have come before us, and share in what it is that makes the artillerymen special."

Lt. Col. Keith Klemmer, commander of the 1st Battalion of the 206th, welcomed all those in attendance and formally began the ceremony with a reading of both regiments' lineage. At the conclusion of the reading, a batch of the traditional artillerymen's brew was made up. Pouring the components of the brew straight from an expended shell, the potency of the mixture was noticeably tame in accordance with General Order 1A, which prohibits the use of alcohol in the Iraqi Theatre. The

evening's ceremony included a special table, with full place setting, as a reminder of those artillery Soldiers lost in the current conflict.

The 'Order of St. Barbara' is a shared heritage between artillerymen of the Army and the Marine Corps. In attendance were Marine

artillerymen of the Coalition Military Training Team (CMATT), who provided theatrical entertainment at the dining-in with a skit extolling the virtues of the Artillery, known as the 'King of Battle.'

As the final formal event of the evening, 14 Artillerymen; Maj.

Michael Spraggins, Capt. Donald Jack and Bradley Johns, 1st Sgt. Jerry Hopper, Sgts. 1st Class Andrew Freeman, William Bullock, Vernon Horne, Daniel Jackson, and Dwayne Schulterman, Staff Sgts. Luis Ortiz, and James Paiva and Sgts. Gerald Denaris and Richard Gage were inducted into 'The Honorable Order of St. Barbara.'

"Induction into 'The Order of St. Barbara' honors those that have consistently contributed to the success of this battalion," said Klemmer. "It is primarily given to the outstanding artillerymen of our group, but induction has included chaplains and medics assigned to the battalion."

Selection into the Order is made by its current members.

Noting the high honor bestowed by the award, Brigade Fire Support Officer and Hope, Ark. resident Maj. Michael Spraggins said, "This is just such an honor. To be recognized by your peers like this, it really is an honor for me."



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment  
Brig. Gen. Richard Formica, commanding general, III Corps Artillery places the medal of St. Barbara around the neck of Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Jackson inducting Jackson and 13 other distinguished artillerymen into the Order of St. Barbara.

# Commandos

Page 12

Jan. 22, 2005

## Mountain Medics Train Iraqis to Save Lives

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin  
10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq - A bandage will cover an Iraqi's wound as easily as an American Soldier's. Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, are ensuring that medics on both sides know how to use them in a life and death situation.

Medics from several bases in Iraq, as well as Iraqi soldiers, firemen and other personnel in civil service jobs came together here for medical training with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

Classes are primarily for medics to complete mandatory re-certification. Without in-theater classes, the Soldiers would have to make up the class three months after they returned from deployment. Soldiers from neighboring bases also benefit by refreshing their skills.

"We're grateful to get the training over here," said Sgt. Crystal Evans, a medic from Abu Ghraib prison. "They don't provide this class at Abu Ghraib. They're providing a great service to us. If we didn't take the class here ... we would have to take the longer course," when they redeployed, she said.

Although Evans is a trained medic, she is often tasked to perform duties outside of her regular training. The refresher course keeps training up to date for Soldiers like Evans, said Sgt. David Annable, 210th Forward Support Battalion, 10th Mountain Division.

The classes are not just boring lectures



By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, 10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs  
Sgt. David Annable, 210th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division instructs medics from Abu Ghraib prison in a refresher course meant to keep the Soldier's training up to date.

directly related to our medics' ability to treat at the point of an injury." The classes, which cover everything from basic first aid to more complex medical tasks, also double as training for a variety of Iraqi professions, including Iraqi National Guard soldiers and firemen, who will bring their knowledge back to their comrades.

"For medics, it's real important for them to provide quality care," he said. "They have to be trained and proficient in all things. We don't want medics standing around, saying they don't know what to do. This class is

"It's very different," Lott said. "We've had doctors, engineers, medics, firefighters. We have all different people from Iraq."

One Iraqi with prior experience in the

medical field said the classes are a valuable refresher course.

"They teach all the fundamentals of nursing as it relates to medical care," the Iraqi, who wished to remain anonymous for security reasons, said.

Even though Iraqis are learning to save lives, insurgents still cause trouble for them, the Iraqi said.

"If anyone knew I was here, they would kill me," he said. "This is my country. I don't care if I'm killed."

Not all of the Iraqis trained come with years of medical experience. Lott said it is difficult but rewarding to teach Iraqis a new approach to medical treatment.

"Our views are different on life," he said. "They think if you get shot you are dead. We had a fire chief who was a colonel in the Iraqi Army. It was hard to explain what we were trying to do. But once he understood it, he embraced it. It was good to see his conversion."

Lott said the 1st Cavalry and 10th Mountain Divisions are working to increase training for ING soldiers and other Iraqis. He said teaching them basic life saving skills will help decrease fatalities. Annable said their 1st Cav. counterparts are helping to expand the minds of Iraqi medics.

"They gave us combat life saver books in Arabic and Farsi," he said. "I think we'll start to see more Iraqis in the courses."

The training is important for all experience levels and ethnicities, the Iraqi said. What is important is that lives are saved.

## Soldiers Inducted into Sgt. Audie Murphy Club

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin  
10th Mnt. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq -- "What is private Snuffy's Social Security number? What contributions have you made to the war effort? What makes you a combat leader? Go!"

These are but a few of the potential questions Staff Sgt. David Lamothe and Sgt. Neill Schultz, 210th Forward Support Battalion, faced to gain acceptance into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club, a notoriously difficult board for elite non-commissioned officers, Nov. 6.

Both Soldiers were nominated for consideration by Command Sgt. Maj. Eric Williams, 210th FSB sergeant major. He was impressed with their performance during their promotion boards.

Williams has only nominated five Soldiers in his career, including Lamothe and Schultz, Williams said.

Lamothe said he was both honored and terrified to be nominated.

"When he told me I was going, I got a pit in my stomach because I knew everything I studied for (the promotion) boards was just scratching the surface," he said.

The Soldiers had two months to prepare for the infamously difficult boards. They had no idea what kind of questions the board would ask, so they studied every aspect of the Army.

"This board is different from any other board," Schultz said. "I didn't know what to expect. We spent all our free time studying. Any down time we had was consumed with studying."



By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, 10th Mnt. Public Affairs  
Sgt. Neill Schultz and Staff Sgt. David Lamothe, 210th Forward Support Battalion, carry a field litter in Baghdad. Schultz and Lamothe were inducted into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club Nov. 6.

Lamothe and Schultz said they credit much of their success to 1st Sgt. Wayne Knowles, a member of the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club, who offered advice and moral support in the way only a first sergeant can.

"He had undying faith in us," Lamothe said. "If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't have believed in myself. There was a time I told him I wasn't going to the board. I said I

would go next time, he said 'like hell you are.'"

The months passed, and it was finally time for the two Soldiers to put their skills to the test. They were escorted to the International Zone for four days of preparation, studying and hob knobbing with Audie Murphy members. Lamothe and Schultz, along with eight other nominees, had dinner with Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola, 1st Cavalry Division's command sergeant major, as well as other sergeants major on the nominee board.

"It was very nerve wracking just being around everyone there," Schultz said. "You had to raise your standard in everything you did."

That was nothing compared to the boards, the culmination of all their preparation, Lamothe said. Before the Soldiers were scrutinized, they were introduced by Williams. When it was their turn, each Soldier had to approach the doorway, knock three times and wait for permission to enter. After reciting the non-commissioned officer's creed, the bombardment of questions began.

"Sergeant major brought the heat and brought it quick," Lamothe said. "He said 'I want you to tell me everything about yourself from the minute you joined the Army until now. Go!' It was the first time I was literally shaking in my boots."

"You have to know a wide range of subjects," Schultz added. "These sergeants major have been around for a long time; they know when they're being flubbed. You either have what they're looking for or you don't."

Many of the questions Lamothe and Schultz had no way of preparing for. Their leadership ability was tested in a series of hypothetical scenarios.

"You can't study to a question like 'what is your biggest contribution to the war effort?'" Schultz said.

The board also asked detailed questions about the nominee's knowledge of their Soldiers. Anything from their birthdates to Social Security numbers were up for inquiry.

"You have to know everything about your Soldiers," Lamothe said. "Where they're from, what color hair they have, what their last [physical fitness test] score was. You can't study everything. You have to just know your Soldiers."

After a grueling session of questions, the Soldiers were asked to leave the room while the board discussed the Soldier's admittance to the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club. Applicants need unanimous approval to gain admission. Lamothe and Schultz were elated when The Soldiers said they were proud to represent their battalion, brigade and the 10th Mountain Division at a 1st Cav. Div. board.

"It's the best you can do, the pinnacle of the NCO corps," Schultz said. "It's the best of the best. It's something I wanted to be a part of."

Schultz and Lamothe have reached the pinnacle of their careers, forever associated with the most decorated Soldier in American history. Now they have to remain on the top of their game, Schultz said.

"We have to live up to that," he said. "Audie Murphy has a reputation to uphold. We have to live up to that."



# Tiger Brigade

Jan. 22, 2005

Page 13

## 256th Medics Provide A U.S. Army "Band-Aid"

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux  
256th BCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq--In a collective effort to help heal the people of Iraq, Company C, 199th Forward Support Battalion (FSB), 256th Brigade Combat Team, collaborated with several units from Camp Liberty to conduct a medical screening at a local school.

On Dec. 18, units from the 18th Military Police Brigade, 16th MP Brigade, 617th MP Brigade, 307th Psychological Operations Battalion, and the Iraqi Highway Patrol (IHP) joined the medics of the 256th BCT at the Shatt Al Arab School in hopes of curing some of the common ailments that might be plaguing the children.

Maj. Alan Kabakoff, with the 16th MP Brigade, explained that humanitarian missions like this play a vital role in winning the war on terror, although sometimes it's hard to see.

"It's like fire prevention," he said, "Everyone knows that it works, it's just hard to prove, unless something bad happens."

Kabakoff has worked with the Iraqi Highway Patrol on several missions and said that the unions have always proven to be successful. They have linked up to distribute shoes, school supplies, and at one time even Beanie Babies. He said that you never know what one simple act of kindness can lead to or what the long term effects will turn out to be.

"These people want the same things that we do," Kabakoff said. "They want safe schools, safe homes, and safe areas to raise their kids. The IHP and U.S. forces working together proves that they (the IHP) are not puppets of the government."

Staff Sgt. Jason Escoyne, Co. C, 199th



By Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256th BCT Public Affairs

Sgt. Jeanne Marie Crochet from Lafayette, La., of Company C, 199th Forward Support Battalion, attempts to communicate with a child and find out where he may have some "ouches." Crochet and other Soldiers from Camp Liberty conducted medical screenings of the children at a local Baghdad school Dec. 18.

FSB, was involved in getting the vital signs of the children and said that luckily they didn't find anything seriously wrong with anyone.

"If they had anything wrong at all it was mainly just the common cold," he said. "We saw a lot of runny noses and coughing, but the main thing that we were happy to see was that the kids were in good spirits."

The collective group of Soldiers handed out soccer balls, candy, and school supplies, which no doubt, contributed to the excitement of the children, but it was also an effort to calm their fears.

"Some of them (the kids) were a little frightened at first," Escoyne noted. "I don't think that the majority of them had

ever seen a thermometer before."

The medics cured this ailment by demonstrating on themselves and also by showing the children that their classmates, who went before them weren't harmed in the process.

Sgt. Jeanne Marie Crochet, Co. C, 199th FSB, works as a pediatric nurse in her civilian field. She said the illnesses they encounter here in Iraq were not so different from the common cold season in the states.

"This is the busy season for the common cold, even at home, but that was the main sickness that we saw here," she said.

In addition, Crochet said that a lot of the kids had impacted ears which are easily cured with warm water and hydrogen

peroxide. Unfortunately, the supplies for the medics are very limited right now.

"I'm extremely spoiled at my (civilian) job with equipment and supplies," she said, "Slowly, we're getting the things in that we need, but for the most part we have been dealing with the bare minimum."

Crochet added that she has taken it for granted to have a machine that will tell you all of the vital signs in seconds. She said that even doing a very simple thing like that took a while with the kids, because they just didn't have the technology to do it quickly.

Crochet's job was to do a complete head to toe assessment of the children after all of their vitals had been taken. She conducted an eyes, ears, nose, and throat evaluation and worked her way through all of the systems. The kids were screened for pulmonary, cardio, and gastro-intestinal illnesses.

The pediatric medications were also a big issue, but the team worked around them as much as they could.

"We have no pediatric meds here, so we are having to convert what we could in order to get the children well," Crochet said.

Maj. Whit Gallaspy is a physician with the 199th FSB. He said the operation was a huge success. He admits that the kids were a little frightened at first, but once they realized that the Soldiers were there to help them, they really warmed up. He also said the outlook for continuing missions such as this one is very hopeful.

"I think that the opportunities are almost endless for the 256th medical staff to do this type of thing and establish trust and good will with the people," Gallaspy said. "We can take care of some of the medical problems that are out there."

## Donated Generator Builds Bond with IPs

By Spc. Erin Robicheaux  
256th BCT Public Affairs

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad, Iraq -- At the gate of an entrance checkpoint (ECP), Battery B from the 1st Battalion, 126th Field Artillery Regiment (attached to 1st Battalion, 141st Field Artillery Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team), has made some very unique friends. Capt. Craig Van Kirk, from Hartland, Wis. and commander of the battery, explained how the two nations came together for the betterment of the IP's.

"(The IP's) generator broke and we had an extra one that we weren't using," he said. "It wasn't the best but we made it work until we could get theirs fixed."

The generator supplies the power for all of the electricity in the police station,

Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery Demet from Delevan, Wis. and the noncommissioned officer in charge of a entrance control point to Camp Liberty in Baghdad, pours gasoline into a generator donated to the Iraqi Police at Station 21.

including security lights that shine right onto the ECP.

"It's a really large checkpoint," said VanKirk, "we search around 220-270 trucks a day so it's pretty busy most of the time."

The lack of power would also be detrimental to the functions of the Iraqi Police. Currently, the station houses approximately 45 prisoners so it's crucial that the officers have electricity and are able to keep their operations running at all times.

As a result of this gesture of goodwill a friendship has been established between the two forces. The day after the Soldiers donated the generator to the police, they were invited in for tea symbolizing that the involved parties were now friends. The IP's have already helped B Bat. 1/126 out, according to 2nd Lt. Nicholas Braun of Burlington, Wis.

"Just the other day there was a suspicious car sitting in our area of operation," Braun said. "He wasn't doing anything, but the police came into our checkpoint to chase him off, just in case."

The leadership at the police station is very grateful for the help that the Americans have given them and say that they will do whatever they can in the future to help their new friends. Col. Kareem Mahood Selman, commander at Station 21, is very thankful for the help of the Soldiers and has said that he will find a way to pay them back.

"The generosity of the Soldiers goes beyond the government," he said.

The IP's have a variety of missions on their own, including manning checkpoints, chasing down thieves and terrorists, and basically being on the lookout for anyone who needs help.

Lt. Col. Mohad Dahesh, assistant commander of Station 21, is ready to work with the Americans to establish solidarity however he can.

"It will take a long time to make things better, but maybe in the future we will find peace," Dahesh said. "Soldiers and the media must work to show the people of this country the good things that they are doing. The media only shows when things are blown up, the people need to see good things."



By Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256th BCT Public Affairs

## 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers Get 'Vandalized'

Story by Sgt. John Queen  
3rd BCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- For more than an hour and half New Years Eve, veteran punk rockers, the Vandals rocked the auditorium at Camp Union III with the enough force to rattle the rivets loose on the nearby crossed sabers monument in central Baghdad.

The Los Angeles-based band was here in the Middle East on a two week Morale, Welfare and Recreation tour entertaining troops in Kuwait and Iraq.

From their original Christmas number "Oi to the World", to punked out version of Mary Poppins "Supercalifragilistic-expi-docious" and "Summer Days" from the movie Grease, the band had the crowd literally bouncing off the walls.

Spc. Matthew Byars, a medical specialist assigned 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry and a resident of Nashville, Tenn. said it was an outstanding concert. "I've been a fan of theirs since the '80's.

"I never got a chance to see them though for one reason or another," he said. "I was blown away when I found out they were playing here. Punk rock is the core of everything I am. I even married a punk rock chick."

As guitarist Warren Fitzgerald flailed, kicked and jumped all over the rostrum, singer Dave Quackenbush belted out lyrics and bassist Joe Escalante wildly plucked away at a gold guitar inlaid with a heliograph-



By Spc. Jan Crithchfield, 122nd MPAD

A Soldier at Forward Operating Base Al-Amal takes the opportunity to stage dive into a crowd of his fellow Soldiers during a concert played by punk band The Vandals Dec. 28. The punk band stopped in eastern Baghdad during a tour of Iraq and Kuwait.

ic image of the pope.

Meanwhile, a euphoric group of Task Force Baghdad Soldiers formed a mosh pit and brutally slam-danced each other to their hearts content.

The band's lineup also included the energetic drumming of Pennywise drummer Byron McCracken, filling in for Josh Freese.

One Soldier, Pfc. Russell Holt from Tampa, Fla., a long time fan of the group, bear-hugged a blaring amplifier in an attempt to make the music even louder.

"I'm deaf in my right ear," he later joked. "I kept telling them to turn it up! Turn it up!"

It was clear the Vandals enjoyed entertaining troops throughout the region, making

a stop at Forward Operating Base Al-Amal as well. Escalante has even been keeping an online diary on the group's website called "Joe's Sidekick Report."

The band had the entire auditorium screaming and singing when they played "America", the title song from the recent hit movie "Team America".

Fitzgerald was able to steal the show with his onstage antics. At one point he climbed a stack of amplifiers and performed what he called a "little guitar solo," played, oddly enough, with a little guitar. The solo also gave the crowd an unexpected thrill when one of the amplifiers caught on fire.

The flames were quickly extinguished and no one was hurt, but the burning electrical smell seemed to charge the fans up even more.

Unfortunately a number of Soldiers who wanted to see the Vandals were unable to attend the late afternoon show because of their duties here.

"I would have loved to have gone. I've been a fan of theirs since I was a senior in high school," said Capt. Jason Toepfer, an operations planner for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. "But, I had orders to finish. Duty first.

"I think it's great that the Vandals did a tour here in Iraq, though," added Toepfer, a self proclaimed big punk fan from Spokane, Wash. "I wish more bands like them would do it."



By Sgt. John Queen, 3rd BCT Public Affairs

Overjoyed Soldiers in Baghdad's Camp Union III brutally slam dance while the punk rock group, the Vandals, perform Dec. 31.



By Spc. Jan Crithchfield, 122nd MPAD

Punk rock band The Vandals play a few songs for the troops at Forward Operating Base Al-Amal Dec. 28 during a tour of Iraq and Kuwait.



By Spc. Jan Crithchfield, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Al-Amal let it all hang out in a mosh pit provided by punk band The Vandals Dec. 28, during their tour of Iraqi and Kuwait.



By Sgt. John Queen, 3rd BCT Public Affairs

Warren Fitzgerald, guitarist for the Vandals, plays a guitar solo with his small guitar while standing on top of a stack of amplifiers at a Morale, Welfare and Recreation Forward Operating Base Union III in Baghdad's International Zone Dec. 31. During the solo the amplifier unexpectedly caught on fire. No one was hurt.



# In Recognition

Jan. 22, 2005

Page 15



Photos by Spc. Erin Robicheaux, 256th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

## 256th BCT Bids Farewell to Fallen Comrade

A memorial service honoring 2nd Lt. Christopher W. Barnett (above, left), Company A, 108th Cavalry from Natchitoches, La. was held recently at Camp Liberty in Baghdad, Iraq. Barnett was killed Dec. 23 when his vehicle was hit by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. The ceremony was presided over by Lt. Col. James Waskom, commander of 1st Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, 256th Brigade Combat Team (BCT), whose unit Barnett was attached. Barnett arrived in Baghdad, Iraq on Oct. 29. The song, "I Can Only Imagine," by MercyMe, was played in remembrance of the fallen Soldier.

### Our Fallen Troops

SPC Dwayne McFarlane  
SPC Jeremy McHalfey  
SGT Christopher Babin  
SPC Bradley Bergeron  
SPC Huey Fassbender  
SGT Robert Sweeney  
PV2 Kenneth Vonronn  
SSG William Manuel  
SSG Nathaniel Nyren  
SPC Joshua Marcum  
PFC Armand Frickey  
SPC Warren Murphy  
SFC Kurt Comeaux  
SPC Damien Fick  
SPC Jimmy Buie  
PFC Jeff Lebrun

For all of our fallen troopers; you are gone but not forgotten. We will continue the fight.



### Heroes Honored

## Sadr City-based Battalion Rewarded

By Capt. Michael Martinez  
TF Lancer Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Task Force Lancer - made up mainly of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment - has been working hard to improve the living conditions in eastern Baghdad for more than ten months. Sometimes, those efforts meant ridding the streets of insurgents and thugs.

Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, the commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division, came to recognize the efforts of some Task Force Lancer Soldiers during an awards ceremony, whose heroism has made a difference in the lives of the people in Sadr City.

In all, Chiarelli awarded five Bronze Star Medals, five Army Commendation Medals with Valor Device and ten Purple Heart Medals to Task Force Lancer troops for their heroism during combat operations in Sadr City in August.

For one recipient, it was a proud, but humbling experience.

Staff Sgt. Joshua York, Company C, 2-5 Cavalry, was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for exceptionally meritorious achievement as a Bradley Fighting Vehicle

section leader during operations in Sadr City. Several rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) gunners ambushed his vehicle while he was securing a weapons cache. Upon securing the cache, York repelled the attack and destroyed the insurgent fighters. Two days later, he bravely defended a destroyed Bradley section, inflicting heavy losses to the enemy until his unit could recover the vehicle.

"I am really proud to receive the Bronze Star, but I wish I hadn't," York said. "I'm glad I did what I did in Sadr City and I'm proud to be with a bunch of great guys in Charlie Company."

Awards were not the only item on the venue. One member of the task force took the opportunity to reaffirm his commitment to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America.

Sgt. Winton Burriss, Headquarters Company, 2-5 Cavalry, took the oath of re-enlistment, administered by his commanding general.

"It was a good opportunity to stay in the 1st Cavalry Division," Burriss said. "This is a great battalion to be in, and I look forward to its future as a Unit of Action. It would have been perfect if my wife was



By Capt. Michael Martinez, Task Force Lancer Public Affairs

Lt. Col. Gary Volesky is congratulated by the 1st Cavalry Division commanding general, Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, after receiving the Silver Star Medal for heroism in Sadr City in August.

present, but having Maj. Gen. Chiarelli re-enlist me was the best I could have asked for."

The surprise of the day shocked everyone, especially the task force's commander, Lt. Col. Gary Volesky. The division commander awarded Volesky the Silver Star Medal for heroism.

On Aug. 16, Volesky personally led an ad hoc element of two tanks and 11 Bradley Fighting Vehicles to rescue a Bradley Fighting Vehicle section that was

isolated and in heavy contact in Sadr City.

Insurgent RPG gunners had earlier ambushed a tank section. They then ambushed a Bradley Fighting Vehicle when it was dispatched to secure the damaged tank.

The 1st Brigade Combat Team's commander directed Task Force Lancer, at the time were refitting and conducting maintenance in preparations for Operation Iron Fury, to mount up immediate-

ly and fight its way to the cut-off section.

The crew and dismounted section from the stricken Bradley cleared a building and established a defensive position on its rooftop. Sensing the urgency of the situation, Volesky immediately mounted his Bradley Fighting Vehicle and departed Camp Eagle at the head of the column.

While receiving small arms fire, RPGs and detonations from improvised explosive devices along the route, Volesky continued on and arrived at the site. He secured it and evacuated the wounded.

Iraqi police reported that a 500-man Madhi Army strike force was moving in on the location of the ambushed section. After recovering the damaged vehicle, now engulfed in flames, and the wounded, Volesky called in AH-64 Apache attack helicopters to provide close air support to cover their withdrawal.

The rescue resulted in recovery of the damaged vehicles, 100 percent accountability and 10 insurgent fighters killed.

"I'm extremely honored to receive the award," Volesky said, "but there are 700 other guys who deserve it more than me."

## 'Ocean's 12' Rides Big Wave to the Box Office

"Ocean's 12," the recent sequel to the 2001 hit-movie "Ocean's Eleven," is the rare sequel (although they are becoming more common these days) that expands and improves upon what was started with the original.

As with the first film, the plot is paper-thin: Terry Benedict, the casino-owner who

thief Danny Ocean (George Clooney) & Co. knocked-off in the first movie, has tracked down everyone that participated in the \$160 million heist and gives them an ultimatum: they have two weeks to pay him back everything they took with interest-or else.

So Ocean's 11 get together once again for a series of

scores, but instead of the original Vegas setting, this time things take place in Europe.

In addition to all of the returning cast members from the original film, there are also a few new cast members such as Danny Ocean's contact in Amsterdam played by British actor Robbie Coltrane, and a EuroPol Agent who is hot on the trails of the gang played by Catherine Zeta-Jones.

As in the first one, the cast members have a wonderful rapport in "Ocean's 12" and although the screenplay was credited as being written by George Nolfi, one wonders if it was really more of just an outline that he wrote since so much of the dialogue feels so free-spirited that the cast must have improvised a great deal of it.

Despite Soderberg's rather heavy resume (the dysfunctional drama "sex, lies and videotape," the hard-as-nails revenge thriller "The Limey"-a personal favorite of mine; and the hyper-critical drug-war flick "Traffic," for which he won an Oscar), a

### LeDrew's Reviews

Spc. Erik LeDrew

Movie



great deal of credit for creating the movie's effortless feeling must go to him.

Instead of having the stylish gloss of the original movie, Soderberg has intentionally crafted an imperfect style with "Ocean's 12," over- and under-exposing shots and using a lot of hand-held cameras to give the movie a sort of rough-around-the-edges feel, akin to the New Wave and New Hollywood films of the late '60s and early '70s.

Equally entertaining this time around is the fact that while George Clooney is still the leading man in the film, time is spent developing Pitt and Damon's second-tier characters instead of trying to contrive some new personal issue

for Danny Ocean to deal with (ala his wife Tess being the girlfriend of Terry Benedict in "Ocean's 11").

And it is time well spent.

This time Pitt's character Rusty doesn't feel like he's trying to be as cool as George Clooney, instead he just gives the character a feeling of his own.

And Matt Damon has perhaps, some of the flat-out funniest moments in the film as the pickpocket Linus who feels he's "ready to take a more central role." Whether he's referring to Linus participating more in the heist or himself, Matt Damon, having a larger part in the movie, we're not sure. Probably both.

If this review (and it's current box-office) is any indication, "Ocean's Twelve" isn't quite the main-stream crowd-pleaser the original was, but I mean that in the best possible way.

With all its rough edges and tiny eccentricities, this is one vastly charming caper.



Photo courtesy Warner Bros. Pictures

The sequel to 'Ocean's 11' brings George Clooney and the old crew back together, with a few new additions, for more criminal action in 'Ocean's 12.'

## Soldiers Celebrate 'Uplifting' New Year at Camp Taji

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel  
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- The New Year was brought in with a grunt and a groan as 17 of Camp Taji's strongest gathered at the 4th Brigade Combat Team's gym to determine who was the strongest of them all.

As part of an effort to increase Soldiers' total physical fitness and to provide a little friendly competition, "Warriors" of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division held their second power lifting match Jan. 1.

Said event organizer, Sgt. Eric Preus of Company E, 126th Aviation Battalion, 4th BCT, "When we held the first lifting contest back in September, all we did was bench press. I wanted to change the event to be structured more like a traditional power lifting competition."

Hailing from Richmond, Va., Preus, an avowed gym rat, noticed that many of the Soldiers entering the first competition focused solely on bench-pressing.

"Strength in the upper body is obviously important," he said. "But I was noticing Soldiers focusing on their bench-press, or not working their legs at all. Adding the events that we did provided for a more total-body workout. To win this competition, your entire body must be strong."

In addition to bench-press, the competition now includes the dead-lift and squats as part of the series of events. Competitors are divided by gender into one of four weight classes; lightweight, middleweight, heavyweight and super heavyweight.

On the surface, determining a winner would seem easy; the Soldier who lifts the most wins, but, as Preus explained, a more complex point system is at work to crown



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Staff Sgt. Arturo Castilla a resident of Porterville, Calif. with the 1072nd Transportation Company, 185th Corps Support Battalion squats 345 lbs during the second power lifting competition held at the 4th Brigade Combat Team gym on Camp Taji, Jan. 1.

the winner.

"Each lifter gets three chances to perform their best lift in each of the events," he said. "Points are given for the amount lifted and at the end of the competition, all the points are added up to determine the winner. So someone, for instance, who didn't lift the most during the bench-press but blew everyone away on the squats and maybe placed second on the dead-lift could still end up with the most points and be the over all winner."

For over four hours contestants lifted and squatted massive amounts of weights, pushing themselves with each "round" to push a little bit more the next time. Those not currently lifting cheered on their fellow

Soldiers, urging them to break that final plane and push the weight over the edge. As Preus noted, the competition was more about achieving personal goals than winning.

"All of the Soldiers here have trained very hard for this," he said. "And that really is what this is all about. It's about setting goals for yourself and then achieving them...it's about lifting your personal best and being able to share that accomplishment with those around you."

One of the competitors, Staff Sgt. Willis Chambers of Stuttgart Ark., Company A, 39th Support Battalion, 39th BCT noted that the event also gave Soldiers something else to channel their energies on during a deploy-

ment.

"Something like really allows to you focus on something that isn't your job, something to take your mind away from where you are, even if just while you're in the gym," said Chambers. "I've been lifting off and on since high school, this competition has given me something to really work and train for."

Taking the men's lightweight class with a total score of 1,045 was Sgt. Omar Bouie of the 27th Main Support Battalion, Division Support Command. Chief Warrant Officer Michael Zanders of Troop E, 1-7 Cavalry, 4th BCT took the middleweight class with 1,100 points. In the heavyweight division, Company A, 39th Support Battalion, 39th BCT's Staff Sgt. Willis Chambers garnered an total of 1215 points to take his class. Amassing an impressive 1245 points to lay claim to the super heavyweights was Spc. Justin Barbaree of 1115th Transportation Company, 39th Spt Bn., 39th BCT.

In the women's heavyweight class, Sgt. LeAnn Banda, Company D, 2-227th Aviation Regiment, 4th BCT out-lifted her opponents scoring 415 points to win the overall class. This was the only category featuring women competitors.

Preus, who is scheduled to rotate home soon, offered to pass the torch to anyone willing to pick it up.

"This is such a great event for the Soldiers that it would really be a shame to see it stop when I leave," said Preus. "To anyone who might want to take over, a lot of the footwork has been completed, contacts already made and I would be more than happy to transfer this over, to just keep this thing going."